

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO USMISSION NATO

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SECDEF WASHDC

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMSIXTHFLT

USDOCOSOUTH USNM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 3717

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NATO, MPOS, TS

SUBJECT: PROPOSAL FOR NAVOCFORMED VISIT TO TUNISIA

REF: A. USNATO 2986 NOTAL

B. TUNIS 1946, APRIL 21, 1972 NOTAL

C. USNATO 1752, APRIL 20, 1972 NOTAL

1. SUMMARY: WE STILL HAVE RESERVATIONS IN PRINCIPLE TO NAVOCFORMED VISIT TO TUNISIA, WHICH ARE OUTLINED BELOW. IN ANY CASE, WE OPPOSE TIMING SUGGESTED, SINCE VISIT SHOULD DEFINITELY NOT COINCIDE WITH ALGIERS NON- ALIGNED CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 1973. END SUMMARY.

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2. WE PREVIOUSLY, FOR PAST TWO YEARS, OPPOSED NATO (NAVOCFORMED) VISIT TO TUNIS ON GROUNDS THAT GOT WOULD FIND IN HARDER RESIST SOVIET REQUESTS FOR SHIP VISITS HERE. THERE HAVE STILL BEEN NO SOVIET VISITS, ALTHOUGH RUSSINAS CONTINUE TO TRY. WE ARE ASSUMING THIS FACTOR LESS IMPORTANT NOW, BUT BELIEVE THAT USNATO AND DEPT SHOULD KEEP IT IN MIND.

3. WE CAN SEE SOME POSSIBLE MERIT TO VISIT AS AN INDICATION OF NATO INTEREST IN TUNISIAN SECURITY. WE SUSPECT THAT TUNISIAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT WOULD PROBABLY BE ENTHUSIASTICALLY IN FAVOR OF VISIT. LINK TO NATO HAS ALSO BEEN TRADITIONALLY IMPORTANT TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA, THOUGH OBVIOUSLY LESS SO TO OTHERS IN GOT INCLUDING FONMIN MASMOUDI. WE ALSO NOTE USNATO CONTENTION (REF A) THAT VISIT HAS " SOLID MERIT" FROM ITS VANTAGE POINT.

4. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE DISADVANTAGES OUTWEIGHT MERITS AT THIS TIME, AT LEAST FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT.

A. WE DO NOT BELIEVE TUNISIA SHOULD BE FIRST NON- NATO- COUNTRY VISITED BY NAVOCFORMED. WHAT HAPPENED TO PREVIOUS PROJECTED VISIT YUGOSLAVIA? AS NON- ARAB COUNTRY, ONE IN WHICH SOVIET FLEET ALREADY VISITS, AND COUNTRY LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO PRESSURES FROM SOURCES LIKE ALGERIA AND LIBYA, IT SEEMS THERE WOULD BE FEWER PROBLEMS THERE.

B. ATTITUDE OF NEIGHBORING ALGERIA AND LIBYA ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT. BOTH WOULD OBVIOUSLY OPPOSE NATO VISIT, AND COULD USE IT AS WEAPON AGAINST TUNISIA. BRITISH EMBASSY TUNIS, QUERIED BY LONDON SOME TIME AGO ABOUT NAVOCFORMED VISIT, HAS ALREADY RECOMMENDED AGAINST VISIT LARGELY ON THESE GROUNDS.

C. U. S. SIXTH FLEET HAS CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH TUNISIA THAT HAS GREAT VALUE TO US AND WE BELIEVE TO SIXTH FLEET AS WELL. THIS RELATIONSHIP IS POTENTIALLY SENSITIVE FROM POLITICAL VIEWPOINT, AND WE WISH TO PRESERVE IT. IN OUR JUDGEMENT BEST WAS TO DO SO IS TO KEEP SIXTH FLEET VISITS AT SAME LEVEL AS IN THE PAST -- ABOUT ONE PER MONTH. RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN PURELY BILATERAL ONE, AND WE BELIEVE IT BEST KEEP IT THAT WAY. COMSIXFLT MAY ALSO WISH COMMENT ON THIS POINT, SINCE ADVERSE REACTION LOCALLY TO NAVOCFORMED VISIT COULD EFFECT GOOD RECEPIVITY SIXTH FLEET NOW ENJOYS.

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5. IF DEPT NEVERTHELESS BELIEVES THAT " SOLID MERIT" PERCEIVED BY USNATO OUTWEIGHTS OUR OBJECTIONS, WE RECOMMEND STRONGLY (A) THAT VISIT NOT TAKE PLACE THIS FALL AT TIME OF ALGIERS NON- ALIGNED CONFERENCE; AND (B) THAT U. S. NOT TAKE LEAD IN APPROACH TO TUNISIANS.

RELPH

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